

and then Satan had won. "But they that desire to be rich, fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Tim. 6: 9. (R. V.)

Is your heart thorny soil? Are you more anxious to be popular than pious, stylish than Christlike, smart than to possess that "love of Christ which possesseth knowledge," rich in money than to be rich in good works, generous, amiable, and rich in all the graces of Christ, to have a house here than a mansion in the Father's house? If so your heart is thorny soil. It will bring forth no fruit of wheat. It "is nigh to perishing and whose end is to be burned."

Good Soil

Some of the seed fell upon good ground. The good soil is the heart that heareth the word,—this all the soils did,—but the good soil understands it, knows its meaning, understands that the purpose of seed is to bring forth fruit. The good soil is not packed hard by the feet of every evil thought and desire, is not full of the hard rock of selfish unbelief beneath an emotional exterior and is not corrupted with the thorns of worldly care and worldly riches.

Such are they who receive the word into their hearts. They understand that it means an entirely new life; that it means the cutting off of the dances, the card parties and the senseless fooleries of the old life; that it means the self-sacrificing life of Christ; that it means many a battle with temptation; prayer, struggle, self-denial and joy in helping others. Such are the every day Christians, not anxious for preferment, willing to serve others, willing to give up their opinions and notions that peace may reign, when no principle of right and wrong is at stake, at services every time it is possible, constantly holding up the pastor's hands with prayer and an encouraging word, blessing the Sunday School superintendant and teachers by an encouraging word or friendly counsel. Such are they whose neighbors love them and who bless humanity, are the constant joy and stay of God's servants, and their lives bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness and love. Some of them thirty, some sixty and some an hundred fold. Such are they whose lives mold other lives, point sinners to God and for whose humble, patient service coming generations will thank God.

And again we ask, are you such a one?

The word has been scattered by the Great Sower; into your heart it falls; what are you doing with the seed?

Lesson Applied

1. The wayside soil, the rocky soil, the thorny soil and the good soil all received the word, but only the good soil understood it.

2. The hard-hearted, the thin-souled, the thorny-hearted and the whole-hearted have the Gospel preached to them, but it profits only the last.

3. The wayside soil was once as soft and mellow as the good ground.

4. The owner of the wayside soil could do one of two things, before it was wayside, keep people and animals from tramping it, or after it has become hard break it up.

5. Are you helping to make any heart as hard as the road?

6. Are you keeping men, evil thoughts and desires from making your heart a path?

7. Emotional religion with no depth of earth is very cheap and,—very good-for-nothing.

8. Thorny ground is good ground and plenty of it, but,—thorns.

9. The only way to do with thorny hearts is to root the thorns out.

10. Tradition tells us that these were the kind of thorns which were platted into a crown for Christ. The thorns in your heart also draw blood from the brow of Christ.

11. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Prov. 4: 23.

12. The good soil must bear the fruit which saves the world from death.

13. All good soil is not equally good, but all is equally favored and blessed of God.

14. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Jno. 15: 2.

THE LESSON FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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1. *A man is always greater than his circumstances.*

It was a queer pulpit Jesus used that day as he taught the multitude from the boat by Galilee's shore. The Saviour had many strange pulpits during his ministry. They were all simply indications that he was a master of circumstances; he never permitted them to control him. There is no situation in life so commonplace that it cannot be dignified and made useful by a strong personality. Jesus was not embarrassed by the lack of churchly surroundings. He had no book, so he read his text from "the manuscript of God." He called to his assistance the things of the fields in front of him, and made them teach his great message.

2. *The Saviour's teachings are meant to be understood by the common people.*

There is told an incident of how some savages got hold of a Bible, and, knowing that it was sacred to the white man, they made an idol of it. They did not attempt to understand it; they only worshiped it. African heathen are not the only persons who have such superstitious notions concerning the Bible. Many people to-day apparently do not realize that the Bible is a book to be understood. It is not dark and mysterious. The Lord speaks thru his book as he spoke beside Galilee—so that his meaning may be clear. That is why Jesus used parables; he told stories to help make his meaning simple and plain.

3. *To bear fruit we need to know and understand the truth.*

Why do we go to Sunday school? There are many reasons, but the parable of the sower gives the best. The seed that fell by the wayside failed to reproduce, because the

soil was not prepared. Jesus explained that the wayside people were those who heard but did not understand the word. The Sunday school is in the business of making intelligent Christians; of helping its members to understand the truth they hear. A faithful Sunday-school scholar cannot well be a way-side hearer. The same reason that creates the Sunday school also builds schools and colleges in mission lands. Our church has always been a teaching church, because it realizes this doctrine of Jesus.

4. *Shallowness in a Christian is a sin.*

A good man once prayed, "Lord, keep me from being a shallow Christian." We know how ridiculous the person often appears who has only a smattering of knowledge. We know, too, that because his education is only superficial it does him and the world very little good. The same truth applies to religion. Shallow Christians are never very happy or very strong. Those are the people represented by the stony places of the parable. If our religion is anything to us it should be everything. It should be so deep in our hearts, and so completely a part of our very being, that it can stand any test. Heat will be unable to burn it, or storms to wash it away.

5. *Single-mindedness in Christian service is a duty.*

City life has its advantages, but it has many disadvantages, too. It is too crowded, complex and busy. With all the interests that throng into a wide-awake city person's life it is easier to forget the duties of religion than it is in the quieter life of the country. We know that many persons lose their interest in the church and in Christ when they come to the city. They forget to keep him first. They become thorny ground, in which the truth is choked by many cares. We should not forget that the place of Christ is first place. Nothing is worth taking into our life which crowds him out.

6. *In spite of much poor soil and many enemies the seed of the word is bringing forth great fruits.*

The pessimist is a man looking up an alley. His vision is too narrow. Because he sees so little, and that of the wrong sort, his opinion is one of discouragement. It never pays to listen to the voice of the croaker, in religion or in anything else. He would have us believe that all the Lord's sowing is falling on the wayside, or on the stony or thorny ground. He forgets that it was only incidentally that any seed went astray. The bulk of it, as intended, fell on good ground and brought forth fruit, thirty, sixty and a hundredfold. To-day the seed of truth is falling on good ground. The kingdom of heaven is an increasing kingdom. God's cause is prospering.

Terse Teachings

Saints may sin by shallowness.

Fruitage depends upon rootage.

There are degrees of fruit bearing.

Even good soil may become better.

Depth of life promotes increase of fruitfulness.